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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: GENERAL MOTORS, AFGHANISTAN, GERMANY,
ABBAS;BERLIN

- 11. Lead Stories Summary
- 12. GM's U-turn
- 13. UN staff in Afghanistan relocated
- 14. German Foreign Policy
- 15. Fall of the Wall
- 16. Mideast Peace Process

11. Lead Stories

ZDF-TV's and ARD-TV's primetime newscasts opened with the protests of Opel workers in Germany. Newspapers led with stories on the situation of Opel, lower tax estimates, and the spread of H1N1. Editorials focused on GM and the tax forecasts.

12. GM's U-turn

N-TV news channel argued: "The cleanest solution would be if politicians stayed out of this and leave the restructuring of Opel up to General Motors. If state subsidies are to be paid in the end, the government must get something in return. This was the mistake made in the negotiations with Magna. The German government had no joker up its sleeve and made itself prone to blackmail."

Deutschlandfunk radio noted: "Berlin and the trade unions are acting as if the sale to Magna would have guaranteed a great success.... Instead of insulting GM, politicians should think constructively: if it was right to provide government assistance to Magna to secure jobs, the same is true for General Motors. This has nothing to do with blackmail. The decision of the new board demonstrates that a new wind is blowing in Detroit... GM has not forgotten how to build good cars, it has only been building the wrong ones for too long. Changing this is an opportunity for Opel, particularly for its branch in Ruesselsheim."

Norddeuttscher Rundfunk radio opined: "The enraged outcry only reveals the helplessness of German politicians, who obviously have not yet understood how the economy works. The old government and regional governments only pursued symbolic policies with an eye

towards the elections."

Under the headline "Humiliated Chancellor," Sueddeutsche editorialized: "The failed sale of Opel is one of the worst setbacks in Chancellor Merkel's chancellery. Never before has she been publically taken for a ride. Never was she so humiliated that she had to withdraw her statements.... She now looks naive, uninformed, and deceived. It is not without irony that Merkel, who often stands accused of waiting too long to make up her mind, is now criticized for having made a decision in favor of Magna too early. Of course, GM did not treat Merkel nicely. We could almost pity her, but only Opel employees deserve our sympathy... Merkel has decided in favor of a kind of invention that made free market advocates skeptical and that was criticized by her own economic minister. Politicians must win if they want to make the state such a big player. But Merkel has lost, Obama has won."

Tagesspiegel's front-page editorial noted that the reasons for GM's problems are "serious management mistakes, poor choices of car models, ignorance towards climate change and an authoritarian leadership of foreign plants. The latter explains the outrage with which German employees responded to the U-turn in Detroit. To make a new start with such a demoralized staff will be the greatest challenge for GM. However, if the managers appointed by the U.S. government learn from their mistakes, Opel has a good chance."

¶3. UN staff in Afghanistan relocated

Under the headline "The UN withdrawal encourages the Taliban," Berliner Zeitung editorialized: "The message of the withdrawal was

BERLIN 00001409 002 OF 003

devastating. Afghanistan does not need more military forces, but more civilian assistance, support for democracy and development aid.

The UN is the key player in coordinating this assistance.... The world organization is a synonym for civilian engagement of the international community in Afghanistan. The Taliban will throw a party. They will surely conclude that attacking the right place drives out foreigners. This increases the risks for everybody else."

¶4. German Foreign Policy

In a front-page editorial, Frankfurter Allgemeine stated: "Apart from the atmosphere, there have not been significant changes in U.S.-German relations since the change of power in Washington. Concerning what lessons should be drawn from the meltdown of the international financial markets, how to counter climate change, how to create peace in Afghanistan and how to get Iran to renounce its nuclear ambitions, there have more often been differences than agreements between Berlin and Washington. In other words, in U.S.-German relations, there is no wall between the time of Bush and the time of Obama."

Under the headline "Goodbye Guido," Spiegel Online editorialized: "The new foreign minister's courtesy call at the White House and the State Department was in fact a farewell." Gabor Steingart argued that Guido Westerwelle is no longer playing the role he used to play in recent years: "The truth is that Westerwelle's courtesy call in Washington was a farewell. The quiet man standing next to Secretary Clinton no longer had anything in common with the loud Westerwelle he once was. Even the color of his ties has miraculously changed from yellow to blue. In the past, it was thought that a yellow tie was adhered to his chest. Journalists were speechless. He has not made a single mistake. Even the young man from the Embassy, who watched the visit with the sincerity of a career diplomat, could not detect a single flaw. Perfect, he said."

¶5. Fall of the Wall

Under the headline "Triumph of an open society," weekly Die Zeit wrote that "the fall of the wall is the most magnificent and happiest moment of German democratic history.... Without 1989, Germany would have gotten stuck halfway along the long path to the West. That year was the most important idealistic resource of Germany's republican democracy and ended the highly dramatic interim

period from 1945 to 1989, which is so difficult to explain nowadays.
With it, the 20th century was suddenly over."

FT Deutschland remarked in a special edition on the fall of the Wall: "The fall of the Wall and German unity are often described as a miracle and the lucky coincidence of history. This is certainly right. However, the last 20 years were, above all, a huge economic experiment. Within the shortest time, a whole country was dismantled, a completely new system was introduced and the country was rebuilt."

Business daily Handelsblatt carried a feature on the revival of the East German economy highlighting: "Twenty years after the reunification, the discussion is still going on as to whether the East German economy could have been restructured more quickly and successfully. However, looking at it realistically, the results are better than could have been expected."

Under the headline "With relish for democracy," Sueddeutsche wrote "while civil rights activists creatively fought for more freedom in East Germany in autumn 1989, they actually toppled the regime."

In an op-ed for Frankfurter Allgemeine, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen wrote that the end of German separation after

BERLIN 00001409 003 OF 003

the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago was also the end of European division. He noted that "a united Germany as part of NATO was a naive dream for a long time, but this dream has come true." He called on Germany to help redefine NATO's strategy. "Germany must play a proper role in this process. This country has always seen NATO as an opportunity for positive change. Today, twenty years after the fall of the wall, Germany is called upon again to open a new chapter in the history of the Atlantic alliance together with its allies."

In an op-ed for Frankfurter Allgemeine under the headline "Center of an integrated world," former U.S. Ambassador to Germany John Kornblum wrote that Germany's central position will make the country the linchpin of new global networks that connect Asia, Europe and both Americas. "With a growing awareness of being at the center of a newly integrated world, the ghosts of the past will be pushed back gradually."

16. Mideast Peace Process

Frankfurter Allgemeine editorialized: "Rumor had it again and again that Abbas would withdraw as a candidate. Given that he has reached retirement age long ago, one can easily understand him. In addition, the successor of the charismatic Arafat has been worn out by the skirmishes under Israeli occupation and open confrontation with Hamas radicals. It would not be a surprise if he did not run again. His political success is rather insignificant. However, Israel is also to blame for this, because it never helped the moderate Abbas gain popularity by making bold concessions. Some Palestinians believe Abbas just wants to be asked again, which could be true as nobody is able to say today who could succeed him."

Sueddeutsche headlined "Abbas does not want to run again," and reported: "Putting his foot down is not Abbas' strength. But now he has spoken clearly. After five years in office, Arafat's successor wants to give up.... He has never been able to leave the shadow of his predecessor.... Abbas, who has been consistently pursuing negotiations instead of violence, is seen by a part of the Palestinians as a poodle of the Israelis and the Americans."

MURPHY